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Key Points

◆ **China's 2010 Defense White Paper provides relatively little new data and less information about Chinese military capabilities and modernization efforts than previous editions. Consistent with past white papers, this one does not provide any information about specific weapons systems or about nuclear forces and modernization efforts.**

◆ **An INSS methodology for evaluating military transparency indicates that China's 2010 white paper receives lower transparency ratings than the 2008 edition and provides less information than defense white papers of other major Asia-Pacific powers.**

◆ **China emphasizes the importance of transparency about strategic intentions rather than capabilities.**

◆ **Although Chinese military officers state that increased transparency is intended to reassure neighbors about China's benign intentions, efforts to downplay China's expanding military capabilities suggest that the 2010 Defense White Paper will make little progress toward this goal.**

Chinese Military Transparency: Evaluating the 2010 Defense White Paper

by Phillip C. Saunders and Ross Rustici

The People's Republic of China (PRC) State Council Information Office released the seventh edition of its biennial defense white paper, "China's National Defense in 2010," on March 31, 2011. This document aims to communicate the latest information on China's military development, strategy, capabilities, and intentions. China began publishing defense white papers in 1998, partly as a means of increasing transparency in response to regional concerns about the growing capabilities and actions of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Despite the systematic release of these documents, many of China's neighbors and other regional powers continue to express concerns about China's lack of military transparency. The Chinese maintain that they are becoming more open over time and highlight the importance of transparency about strategic intentions rather than capabilities.

According to Senior Colonel Chen Zhou, the principal coordinator of China's defense white papers, the document is "a government statement that provides a public explanation on the state's national defense policy and national defense conduct." In his opinion, the 2010 iteration has three new main points: "First, the white paper further expounds on and openly declares the basis for and the determination in China's pursuit of a national defense policy that is defensive in nature; second, it systematically introduces new developments in the building and deployment of the armed forces; and third, it fully presents the important roles played by the armed forces in such aspects as confidence-building and protecting peace." He concludes that the issuance of China's defense white paper serves three distinct functions: externally, it builds confidence and clears doubts; internally, it raises national defense awareness; and it deters and warns adversaries.[1] Major General Qian Lihua, director of the Ministry

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of National Defense Foreign Affairs Office, states, "One important function of the national defense white paper is increasing trust and alleviating the suspicions of the outside world."[2] These and other interviews indicate that the Chinese view the purpose of defense white papers in a similar fashion to the rest of the world: as documents intended to increase trust and confidence and reduce suspicion. These goals cannot be achieved without a high level of transparency.

Unfortunately, the use of the word *transparency* is problematic due to multiple competing definitions. This makes objective analysis about claims of military transparency difficult in general, including in the context of defense white papers. A number of well-qualified analysts have discussed limited transparency in the 2010 Chinese paper, but the subjective nature of their assessments makes their conclusions less persuasive to a Chinese audience.[3] To help address this gap, Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders published the study *Assessing Chinese Military Transparency* in 2010.[4] The study, which created a comprehensive rating system for defense white papers,

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defines *military transparency* as "providing information about military capabilities and policies that allows other countries to assess the compatibility of those capabilities with a country's stated security goals." This study adapted a sample defense white paper format developed in a Council for Security and Cooperation in the Asia Pacific working group and created a rating template with 7 sections and 19 individual categories designed to primarily assess current military structure, capabilities, and doctrine. The rating template also includes a forward-looking element by evaluating defense budget trends and planned acquisitions/procurement.

For each of the 19 categories, the rating system includes specific definitions and criteria for each of the four levels of transparency, which are represented using a color-coded system. Red, orange, yellow, and green ratings indicate, respectively, no transparency, low transparency, medium transparency, and high transparency. The rating system uses consistent language in the rating criteria to ensure comparability across categories. For example, an orange (low) transparency rating usually indicates that a white paper listed or identified some relevant information but did not include the description or analysis required for a yellow (medium) or green (high) rating. Each white paper is rated independently by two raters, who refer back to the specific wording of the rating criteria to resolve any disagreements.[5] The methodology and definitions detailed in that study were used to assess the transparency of China's 2010 Defense White Paper. This paper thus serves as an addendum to the original study. It evaluates the transparency of the most recent Chinese white paper and puts the ratings into historical and regional context.

Ratings for China's 2010 Defense White Paper

The following table presents the overall transparency ratings for China's defense white papers. In the analysis below, we provide the rationale for why each of the 19 categories in the 2010 white paper received its specific transparency rating.

Security Environment. This section addresses current or developing international, regional, and internal trends that threaten or have the potential to threaten the country. The section consists of international, regional, and internal categories.

The discussion of China's security environment in the 2010 Defense White Paper generally receives a medium transparency rating. The paper's first chapter, "The Security Situation," is not explicitly divided into international, regional, and internal categories, but the delineation among the three levels of analysis is readily

Chinese Defense White Paper Transparency Ratings, 1998–2010

White Papers	1998	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
Security Environment							
International	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Regional	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Internal	Low	No	No	No	Low	Low	Low
National Security Goals							
Strategic	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
Tactical	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
General Defense Policy							
Doctrine	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Mission	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Major Areas of Concern							
International	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Regional	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Internal	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Current Defense Posture							
Total Personnel	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	No	No
Structure of Force	No	No	Medium	No	Low	Low	Low
Command Structure	Low	Low	Medium	No	Medium	Medium	Low
Armaments	No	No	Medium	No	Low	Low	Low
Defense Management							
Overall Budget	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Budget Trends	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Planned Acquisitions or Procurements	No	No	No	No	Low	Low	Low
International Activity							
Relationships, Exchanges, Joint Exercises	Medium	Medium	High	High	High	High	High
PKO/Humanitarian Missions	High	High	High	High	High	High	High

Key

No Transparency	Low Transparency	Medium Transparency	High Transparency

apparent. The section identifies but fails to adequately analyze a number of trends. Internationally, the chapter highlights that "international strategic competition centering on international order, comprehensive national strength and geopolitics has intensified." In support of this claim, the paper elaborates on tensions within the existing international order and highlights that "progress toward . . . a multi-polar world is irreversible." This section lists a litany of nontraditional security threats such as terrorism, economic insecurity, climate change, nuclear proliferation, insecurity of information, and transnational crime. While there is some discussion of

these trends, there is little analysis. Furthermore, what little analysis there is does not offer any insight into how these trends affect China. The result is a medium transparency rating in the international category.

The regional category also receives a medium transparency rating. This category makes multiple assertions about growing regionalism and the overall security environment. In general, the white paper presents regional economic trends in a positive light, while

> **the white paper presents regional economic trends in a positive light, while acknowledging negative security trends**

acknowledging negative security trends. Despite describing these trends, a consistent lack of analysis and a concerted attempt to deemphasize contentious territorial disputes prevented a high transparency rating. China's limited discussion of internal security trends means that this category received a low transparency rating. (The internal security rating is adversely affected by the rating system, which does not accept the PRC view that Taiwan is purely a domestic issue.) Once the analysis of Taiwan is discounted, the discussion of internal security trends is superficial. In a departure from previous years, there is little discussion of internal economic progress. The focus of this category is on nontraditional security threats and territorial integrity. However, there is no explanation of or support for claims such as "Separatist forces working for 'East Turkistan independence' and 'Tibet independence' have inflicted serious damage on national security and social stability." The inconsistency in identifying and explaining internal security trends coupled with discounting Taiwan equates to a low transparency rating for this category.

National Security Goals. This section addresses the economic, political, social, and security objectives that are critical to the country's development and security and the policy approaches that it pursues to ensure national security objectives are fulfilled. The section consists of strategic and tactical categories.

The discussion of China's national security goals receives a medium transparency rating. The "National Defense Policy" chapter identifies broad "strategic" level national security goals of "safeguarding national sovereignty, security and interests of national development," "building informationized armed forces and winning informationized wars," "maintaining social harmony and stability," and "maintaining world peace and stability." The chapter varies widely in its description of each of these goals, but it outlines three of the four with sufficient detail to garner a medium rating. The "Arms Control and Disarmament" chapter does a far more complete job of not only listing major strategic goals, but also describing the way in which China is attempting to attain them. Because of the disparity of information in these two chapters, the rating for national security goals is considered a low medium. To attain a high rating, the "National Defense Policy" chapter would have to describe all the strategic goals in depth, and both chapters would have to conduct an analysis of how these goals are important to China's national security in addition to prioritizing them.

Tactically, the white paper is far more descriptive. For example, when discussing tactics to maintain world peace and stability, the paper identifies "strategic coordination and consultation with major powers and neighboring countries" as one way to achieve this strategic objective. Because this level of description is consistent throughout the chapter, this category is rated medium. It fails to achieve a high rating because there is no analysis of how these actions will ensure that China's national security objectives are secured.

General Defense Policy. This section addresses the approaches, framework, or principles that guide a country's defense policy and the primary missions, responsibilities, or roles assigned to the armed forces in pursuit of this defense policy. The section consists of doctrine and mission categories.

The discussion of China's general defense policy receives a mix of low and medium transparency ratings.

The "National Defense Policy" chapter details elements of China's doctrine, which is described as a defensive doctrine built upon the philosophy of "only attacking after being attacked" and a self-defensive nuclear strategy. This chapter not only discusses specific approaches to maintaining China's defense, but also links that doctrine to China's national strategic goal of "supporting this important period of strategic opportunities for national development." This category received a medium transparency rating (declining from a high rating in the 2008 white paper) due to an insufficient explanation of this doctrine's role in policy. A more detailed discussion of how a defensive doctrine aids in advancing the identified policy goals would be necessary for the category to earn a high transparency rating.

The "National Defense Policy" and "Deployment of the Armed Forces" chapters specify the missions for China's armed forces. This category receives a low transparency rating due to a lack of consistent identification and description regarding missions. While this section lists some specific missions such as "safeguarding border, coastal, and territorial air security" and "maintaining social stability," there is little discussion of the missions of the military services and the PLA Second Artillery Force (PLASAF), which operates China's land-based nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles. The only specific reference to missions for any of the individual services or the PLASAF is about the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) enhancing "its capabilities in strategic deterrence and counterattack, and develop[ing] its capabilities in conducting operations in distant waters." Despite offering a good description of border security and maintaining social stability, these chapters would have to identify and describe in detail the missions of the service branches and the PLASAF to warrant a medium transparency rating. (The 2008 Defense White Paper included more information about service missions and received a medium transparency rating.)

The disparity between the 2008 and 2010 white paper iterations highlights an important caveat to the rating methodology: It only considers information pre-sented in the current white paper. This technique is at odds with expressed Chinese views that the white papers should be viewed as a set. This divergence between how the paper is rated and the Chinese view occasionally results in a lower transparency rating. For example, the 2008 Defense White Paper has an in-depth discussion of People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) missions, while the 2010 version does not mention its missions at all. We do not believe that these missions have changed in the intervening period, but the fact that the information was not included in the 2010 paper yields a lower transparency rating.

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Major Areas of Concern. This section addresses specific international, regional, or internal situations, issues, conflicts, or problem spots that concern or threaten the country. This section differs from the Security Environment category by focusing on concrete issues and situations and the policies the country employs to confront them. The section consists of international, regional, and internal categories.

The discussion of China's major areas of concern receives low to medium transparency ratings in the different categories. Most of the discussion in this section overlaps with international security trends. In most cases, the white paper does not detail specific international situations or crises that concern China or indicate how it is responding to these concerns. For this reason, both international and regional areas of concern receive a low transparency rating. The 2010 white paper identifies prompt global strike, missile defense, and the new strategic commanding heights (outer space

and cyber space) as China's main international military concerns. It also identifies policy-related concerns regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons and that "deep-seated contradictions and structural problems behind the international financial crisis have not been resolved." The Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan, political turbulence, ethnic and territorial disputes, and maritime and territorial rights are all listed as regional concerns, although often with just a few words devoted to each topic. For an increased rating in these categories, the white paper would need to include a detailed description of the concerns.

The discussion of internal concerns receives a higher rating due in large part to the extensive description of current cross-strait relations. With this as the exception, this section follows the established pattern of listing a few security concerns but offering very little description and no explanation. In addition to issues related to Taiwan, the domestic section also highlights "separatist forces working for 'East Turkistan independence' and 'Tibet independence.'" While issues such as poverty alleviation and natural disasters are referenced in other sections, there is no explicit indication that these are major areas of concern. For a high transparency rating, a greater discussion of internal issues and a detailed analysis would be needed.

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Current Defense Posture. This section addresses the details and composition of a country's armed forces. This includes total number of personnel serving in the defense forces of the country, organization of the armed forces and the order of battle, chain of command and the structure of decisionmaking, and weapons systems and equipment of the armed forces. The section is broken down into total personnel, structure of force, command structure, and armaments categories.

Total personnel. Like the 2008 version, the 2010 white paper does not include an overall figure for the size of the PLA. It does provide the total number of lawyers and legal advisors employed by the armed forces (26,342) and the number of militia (8 million). Despite mission-specific breakdowns for the militia, lawyers, and some international missions, the fact that the white paper does not indicate the number of personnel in the armed forces mandates a rating of no transparency. To achieve an orange rating, the white paper must include an accurate number of personnel in the armed services.

Structure of force. The scant space devoted to the PLA, PLAN, PLAAF, the Second Artillery, the People's Army Police Force, reserves, and militia provides little information on their respective force structures. The paper identifies the number of army combined corps (18), number of fleets and their names, and the air commands in each military region.[6] While this provides a basic overview of how each service is structured, it does not identify or provide the number of combat units within this structure. For example, the paper does not present details on the number of air wings that comprise the Chengdu area command or give the number of planes within each air wing. This category receives a low transparency rating.

Command structure. The only reference to command structure can be found in the "National Defense Mobilization and Reserve Force Building" chapter. While this discussion is detailed and descriptive, it represents only a small fraction of the armed services; as a result, this category receives a low transparency rating (a decline from the medium transparency rating in the 2008 white paper). To achieve a medium transparency rating, the white paper must include the command authority at the highest levels and list specific geographic and service structures.

Armaments. The "Modernization of the People's Liberation Army" chapter contains a general description

of weapons platforms used by each service but has no information on the Second Artillery. For example, the air force operates "airborne early warning and control aircraft, third generation combat aircraft, and air and missile defense systems," and the navy is incorporating "new types of submarines, frigates, aircraft and large support vessels." This listing of general platforms fulfills the basic requirements for a low transparency rating. To increase to a medium rating, the white paper must include a description of particular weapons systems, such as J–10s or DF–21s.

Defense Management. This section addresses a country's defense budget and future procurement plans. This includes overall spending on the armed forces and defense, budget figures that provide historical context for current defense spending or information on future spending plans, and planned weapons systems or capabilities procurements. The section consists of overall budget, budget trends, and planned acquisitions or procurements categories.

The chapter "Defense Expenditure" includes a figure for China's 2010 defense budget (Renminbi 532, about $82.3 billion at current exchange rates). The paper presents a comparison of China's budget as a percentage of China's gross domestic product and state expenditure. A table in the chapter divides China's 2009 defense expenditures into three categories: personnel, training and maintenance, and equipment. The paper includes a brief explanation of what is covered within these three broad categories, but it does not provide any specific figures for spending on procurement or research and development, both of which are important for judging future capabilities. These figures are further divided by active force, reserve force, and militia. Because the chapter does not discuss any defense-related expenditure not included in the official defense budget or provide information on the budgets of individual services, this category receives a medium transparency rating.

The budget trends category receives a low transparency rating. A table in the white paper presents the defense budget as a percentage of China's annual state financial expenditure from 1998 to 2009. This information places China's past defense expenditures into historical context, but the white paper does not provide any estimated or projected size of the defense budget beyond 2010, information that would be needed for a medium transparency rating.

Similarly, the planned acquisitions and procurements category receives a low transparency rating because the white paper offers only general references to some of

> **the white paper offers only general references to some of the capabilities China plans to acquire in order to fulfill modernization goals**

the capabilities China plans to acquire in order to fulfill modernization goals. The majority of these capabilities are related to logistics and to command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C^4ISR). At no point does the white paper discuss any specific weapons platforms, quantities, or timelines for procurement or purchases (which is needed for a medium transparency rating).

International Activity. This section addresses the international activities of a country's armed forces. This includes the country's defense relationships, military exchanges, and joint exercises with other nations, participation in international defense organizations, and participation in bilateral or multilateral peacekeeping or humanitarian missions. The section consists of relationships, exchanges and joint exercises, and peacekeeping operations (PKO)/humanitarian missions categories.

The 2010 Defense White Paper receives a high transparency rating regarding international activity. It provides a description of China's international relationships, exchanges, and joint exercises in the chapters "Deployment of the Armed Forces" and "Military Confidence Building."

It also provides a comprehensive chart listing "Major International Exchanges of the Chinese Military 2009–2010" (appendix I), "Participation in Strategic Consultations and Dialogues 2009–2010" (appendix II), "Joint Exercises and Training with Foreign Armed Forces 2009–2010" (appendix III), and "Imports and Exports of Seven Major Types of Conventional Arms 2008, 2009" (appendices VI, VII). "Deployment of the Armed Forces" details China's participation in United Nations PKOs, the Gulf of Aden mission, and international disaster and relief operations. An appendix provides further information in a chart detailing China's international peacekeeping missions from 1990 to the present. This includes the number of PLA personnel involved, types (observers, staff officers, or police), and dates deployed.

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Another appendix provides further information in a chart detailing China's participation in international disaster relief activities in 2009 and 2010. This includes the country involved, the type of disaster, aid given, value of the aid, and what type of personnel was deployed. While this section continues to receive a high transparency rating, appendix III does not include the PLAAF's joint exercise with Turkey in October 2010. This omission was not enough to reduce the white paper's rating but is notable nonetheless.

Overarching Assessment

Overall, the 2010 Defense White Paper includes little new information and provides less information than previous white papers about military command structure, strategic national security goals, PLA missions, and China's military modernization. When compared to the 2008 white paper, the 2010 iteration receives a lower rating in three categories and a higher rating in only one. Furthermore, there are several categories where the rating did not change, despite a noticeable reduction in information. Our conclusion that the 2010 white paper is less transparent than previous editions is consistent with that of other PLA experts who used subjective criteria and also found that it contained less information than the 2008 edition.[7] While there are indications that the drafters of the white paper are sensitive to foreign perceptions and interested in improving China's military transparency, the new document does not make much progress toward that goal.

Despite the 2010 white paper receiving a lower transparency rating, it does not change the overall assessment in *Assessing Chinese Military Transparency* that China's white paper is approximately as transparent as those of Southeast Asian states and significantly less transparent than the defense white papers of major East Asian and Asia-Pacific states that are a more comparable peer group based on economic and military strength.[8] This conclusion is compatible with the findings of Professor Tai Ming Cheung in his efforts to build a Northeast Asia Defense Transparency Index.[9]

This year's white paper does present a limited amount of new and useful information. It shows that the informationization agenda has been widely adopted throughout the military apparatus, discusses in greater detail advancing C^4ISR capabilities with a new emphasis on viewing space and cyber as strategic issues, hints at building a capable blue water navy with accompanying logistics infrastructure, and lays out the organizational structure and leadership system for national defense mobilization.

Nevertheless, discussion of actual military capabilities decreased significantly in comparison to the 2008 white paper, which devoted separate chapters to each individual service and the Second Artillery. This year's paper contains only five paragraphs on military service modernization efforts. As usual, the white paper focuses heavily on discussion of Chinese intentions coupled

with only vague references to capabilities—and has no mention of any specific weapons systems (for example, China's aircraft carrier program, efforts to develop anti-ship ballistic missiles, or the development of the J–20 stealth fighter).

Despite other countries voicing concern over the lack of specific information regarding PLA capabilities, the PLA leadership has long insisted that intentions rather than capabilities are the more important aspect of military transparency. Furthermore, they often justify China's actions and modernization programs as reactions to what other countries are doing or to broader trends in the development of military technology. In their narrative, China must modernize its armed forces to defend itself. New capabilities or actions that others may perceive as threatening are presented as responses to changes in the international security environment or reactions to other states.

This narrative is laboriously adhered to in the 2010 white paper. Given the precedent of rarely singling out states, the white paper relies on the international security environment to provide justification for China's military capabilities and modernization program. The white paper was reportedly delayed for several months for revisions to the assessment of the security environment (found in the "Security Situation" chapter). These revisions produced a more favorable depiction of the international and regional security environments and may have caused a reduction of information on military modernization programs, which might now appear unmotivated by the more benign description of the security environment.

One striking aspect of the 2010 white paper, only partly captured by the transparency rating system used in our analysis, is its extremely limited and veiled references to adverse regional security developments in 2009–2010. Many security analysts would argue that a more assertive Chinese diplomatic and military posture in the region—including such actions as the harassment of the USNS *Impeccable*, increased Chinese patrolling and naval exercises in the South China Sea, verbal bullying of Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Northeast Asian

countries in regional meetings, and economic retaliation against Japan following a collision between a Japanese coast guard vessel and a Chinese fishing boat—is a major factor that heightened regional security concerns and prompted many countries to improve their security ties with the United States.[10] They would point to North Korea's 2009 nuclear weapons test and 2010 sinking of the South Korean navy ship *Cheo'nan* and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island as important destabilizing regional developments (neither is mentioned in the 2010 white paper). They also highlight the Chinese leadership's reluctance to condemn these actions, increased support for the North Korean regime, and the planned succession

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of Kim Jong-eun as important regional developments.[11] China's actions and role in these events are entirely missing from the discussion of the regional security environment in the 2010 Defense White Paper. The overall tone of the paper—based on language, omitted information, and the amount of text dedicated to issues—seeks to create a message of strategic reassurance to China's neighbors. However, the reduction in transparency about specific Chinese military capabilities and general defense policy is likely to have the opposite effect.

When the findings described above were presented in a recent international conference, one Chinese participant argued that the lower rating for the 2010 white paper is an artifact of the assessment methodology rather than an actual decrease in transparency. He complained that because the assessment did not consider information about command structure and missions presented in previous white papers, the 2010 Defense White Paper

received an artificially low rating. If information from previous white papers had been included, two categories would have received higher ratings and the overall transparency rating would have remained constant.

There are sound methodological reasons for a rating system to focus on the information in a single white paper rather than to rate all available white papers as a set. Rating only the most recent paper avoids the problem of subjective determinations about whether information in older white papers has become dated or inaccurate. This approach also facilitates comparisons across countries, not all of which publish white papers on a regular schedule. It would be possible in principle to construct a moving average system that considers information from both old and new white papers, but this would bias transparency ratings in a upward direction (because transparency ratings in a moving average system would not decline even if a new white paper contained significantly less in-

> **most observers would agree that China's military capabilities have improved significantly over the last 2 years, but the discussion in the white paper provides few details on those changes**

formation than older ones). Accordingly, we believe the rating system should produce as accurate a transparency rating as possible for individual white papers, and then use detailed content analysis to consider why the ratings in individual categories changed. We agree that a comprehensive assessment of a country's military transparency should use all available information.

As we discussed in the explanation of our ratings above, we believe that artifacts in the rating system had limited impact on our conclusion that the 2010 white paper is less transparent than the previous edition. Most observers would agree that China's military capabilities have improved significantly over the last

2 years, but the discussion in the white paper provides few details on those changes. As we rated the 2010 white paper, we found that a number of categories (especially those focused on military capabilities) contained less information than previous editions. In a few cases, this resulted in a lower rating; in other cases, the rating stayed the same even though less relevant information was provided in the 2010 white paper. The armaments category is a good example. The low transparency rating did not change even though the amount of information in the 2010 white paper decreased significantly. Furthermore, the discussion of the services and Second Artillery is drastically reduced. The 2008 white paper devoted approximately 21 percent of its text to the military services and the Second Artillery, whereas the 2010 white paper devoted only 6 percent.

This critique of the assessment methodology misses a broader point about transparency. While we agree that PLA missions probably have not changed since 2008, we do not know that for certain. The drafters of China's white paper may want to keep each edition short and focused on new developments, but that inherently decreases transparency because outside observers are left to wonder if things are omitted because nothing has changed or because China does not want to highlight the changes. Most outside observers would also agree that omitting relevant information about the modernization of Chinese military capabilities in order to make space for a discussion of the military legal system is not a good tradeoff if China wants to increase transparency.

Conclusion

While the 2010 Defense White Paper appears intended to assuage the concerns of China's neighbors and the broader international community about PLA actions and modernization efforts, it does so at the expense of reduced transparency about Chinese military capabilities. The 2010 version includes little new information and provides less information than previous white papers about military command structure,

strategic national security goals, PLA missions, and China's military modernization. Specifically, the 2010 white paper is less transparent than the 2008 version in the categories of General Defense Policy—Doctrine, General Defense Policy—Missions, and Current Defense Posture—Command Structure. (The 2010 edition did, however, improve its transparency rating in the category of Major Areas of Concern—Internal.) This edition of the white paper portrays China's military modernization as a means of aiding the international community and attempts to convey an image of China as a benign international actor. In crafting this message, there are large sections detailing Chinese involvement in international cooperation coupled with a noticeable omission of any Chinese agency in regional incidents.

This reduction in transparency is at odds with China's own position regarding the evolution of transparency. For years, Chinese interlocutors have maintained that greater transparency benefits the strong at the expense of the weak. Major General Luo Yuan, deputy secretary general of the Chinese Military Science Association, states:

> *Military transparency could only . . . progress gradually in a step by step fashion. . . . Any comparison on China's progress in military transparency should be vertical. . . . China has become more in line with international practice in the past few years, and it is sincerely trying to reinforce trust and erase doubt, while hoping to gain understandings from the international community on the modernized construction of China's national defense.*[12]

Unfortunately, the 2010 iteration of China's defense white paper does not conform to this ideal. It is undeniable that China is a growing military power. Publicly available Chinese assessments of PLA capabilities[13] place China on par with regional powers such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia; many outside observers would rate the PLA as the strongest Asian military in the region. Yet rather than progressing toward the level of transparency of other Asia-Pacific major powers, the 2010 white

paper constitutes a step backward. Several Chinese military officers have stated that as China grows in comprehensive national power, it should become more transparent. The many interested observers of the PLA will await the publication of China's 2012 Defense White Paper to judge whether the 2010 paper is a one-time exception to the trend of gradually increasing Chinese military transparency or reveals a cap on China's willingness to be transparent about its expanding military capabilities. Transparency about both intentions and capabilities is important if confidence-building measures such as publication of defense white papers are to achieve their objective of "increasing trust and alleviating the suspicions of the outside world."

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] This paragraph draws upon an interview conducted by *Guangming Ribao Online*, April 15, 2011, available at <http://theory.gmw.cn/2011-04/15/content_1836103.htm>.

[2] Yuan Yuan, "PLA Major General Expounds on Military Transparency in PRC Defense White Paper," Beijing *Liaowang*, no. 40.

[3] Dean Cheng, "The Limits of Transparency: China Releases 2010 Defense White Paper," Web Memo, The Heritage Foundation, April 7, 2011, available at <www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/04/the-limits-of-transparency-china-releases-2010-defense-white-paper>; Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson, "Grading China's Military Plans," *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2011, available at <http://the-diplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2011/04/09/grading-chinas-military-plans/>; Michael S. Chase, "China's 2010 National Defense White Paper: An Assessment," *China Brief* 11, no. 7, April 22, 2011, available at <www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=37839&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=517>.

[4] Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders, *Assessing Chinese Military Transparency*, China Strategic Perspectives 1 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, June 2010), available at <https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/ndupress&CISOPTR=41584&CISOMODE=print>.

[5] See Ibid., 6–12, for a more detailed discussion of the methodology.

[6] All of this information was presented in the 2008 white paper, and in the case of the air force and Second Artillery, it was presented in more detail.

[7] See the comments of Michael D. Swaine, Dennis J. Blasko, and David M. Finkelstein at the Center for Naval Analyses–Institute for National Strategic Studies roundtable on the 2010 Defense White Paper, April 20, 2011, available at <www.vimeo.com/visioncna/cnachinaconference>; and Ian Easton, "China's National Defense in 2010," Roundtable Report, July 2011 (forthcoming), available at <www.cna.org/centers/china/publications>.

[8] Updated tables comparing China's 2010 Defense White Paper with other Asia-Pacific white papers are available on the INSS Website at <www.ndu.edu/press/China2010transparencytable.html>.

[9] Professor Tai Ming Cheung presented key findings of the "IGCC 2010/11 Northeast Asia Defense Transparency Index" at a University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Workshop on Defense Transparency in Northeast Asia, La Jolla, CA, April 28–29, 2011.

[10] For contemporaneous analysis, see the relevant issues of Pacific Forum Center for Strategic and International Studies *Comparative Connections*, available at <http://csis.org/program/comparative-connections>.

[11] For regional perspectives, see Ross Babbage, "Australia's Strategic Edge in 2030," Kokoda Paper no. 15, February 2011, 31–34, and Japan's 2010 Defense White Paper, 3–5, 61–64.

[12] Luo Yuan, Beijing *Liaowang*, no. 15, April 11–17, 2011, 64.

[13] Department of Defense (DOD), *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: DOD, 2010); National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), *NIDS China Security Report* (Tokyo: NIDS, 2011).